

The Beautiful Names And Attributes Of

Allah

Important Principles To Remember



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bin Salih Al-'Uthaimeen



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The Beautiful Names & Attributes of ALLAH

Important Principles To Remember

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Introduction

By the Noble Shaikh: ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdullah bin Baz

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

All praise is for Allah (SWT). O, Allah (SWT), send prayers and salutations upon the Messenger of Allah, upon his family and his Companions, and upon those who follow his guidance.

To proceed:

I was presented with this valuable work, which covers Allah’s Names and Attributes, and which is authored by the noble and esteemed scholar, our brother, Shaikh Muhammad bin Salih Al-‘Uthaimen. The noble Shaikh aptly titled this work, Excellent Principles in Regard to Allah’s Beautiful Names and Attributes. I listened to it [being read to me] from its beginning, until its end and found it to be a book of great value and importance. It clearly explains the beliefs of our Pious Predecessors which relate to Allah’s Names and Attributes. Furthermore, it consists of important principles, as well as, numerous lessons which relate to Allah’s Names and Attributes.

In this work, the author explains, among other lessons, the meaning of an important Islamic belief which is often misunderstood. It is a belief which is mentioned in the Book of Allah (SWT) and a belief which, for the people of Ahlus-Sunnahwal-Jama‘ah, conveys both a general and a specific meaning. It is the belief that Allah, the Possessor of Might and Majesty, is with His created beings.

Despite the fact that this belief has a true and blatant meaning for us, it in no way implies that Allah is physically connected to created beings. On the contrary, He is above His Throne. This is what He informed us of in regard to Himself, and this is what is appropriate to His Majesty and Magnificence. What, 'Allah being with His created beings' means, however, is His comprehensive knowledge of them and His complete control over them – He hears all of their sayings and movements, He sees the reality they live on the outside as well as that which is in their hearts, and He protects, supports, and guides His Messengers and His believing slaves.

This work also consists of refutations of those sects which propagate false beliefs when it comes to the Names and Attributes of Allah. May Allah reward the author well and multiply his rewards for him. May Allah increase both us, and the author, in knowledge and guidance. May He make this work a source of great benefit for its readers and for all Muslims. Verily, it is to Him that we turn to for our needs, and He is fully able to answer our supplications.

This introduction has been dictated by one who is poor [in need] regarding Allah, ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdullah bin Baz – may Allah forgive him. O, Allah, send prayers and salutations upon our Prophet, Muhammad, as well as upon his family and his Companions.

‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdullah bin Baz

General Director of the Offices of Scholarly Research,

Fatwas, Islamic Propagation, and Guidance

The Author's Introduction

Indeed, all praise is for Allah; we praise Him, repent to Him, and seek His forgiveness and help. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own selves and of our wicked deeds. Whomsoever Allah (SWT) guides, none can lead astray; and whomsoever Allah leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, and He has no partner; and I bear witness that our Prophet Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. O. Allah, send many prayers and salutations upon him, upon his family and his Companions, and upon those who follow them in goodness.

To proceed:

Belief in Allah's Names and Attributes is one of the pillars of our belief in Allah (SWT). For indeed, our belief in Allah (SWT) consists of the following pillars: belief in His existence, belief in His Lordship, belief in His Godhood, and belief in His Names and Attributes. Furthermore, believing in the Oneness of Allah's Names and Attributes is one of the three categories of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism): Tawheed of Lordship, Tawheed of Worship, and Tawheed of Allah's Names and Attributes.

Thus, the importance of properly understanding Allah's Names and Attributes cannot be overstated. One cannot worship Allah (SWT) in a correct and complete manner, until one acquires knowledge of the meanings and significance of Allah's Names and Attributes. Only when one gains that knowledge can one worship Allah (SWT) based on wisdom and clarity. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا﴾

{And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them.} (Qur'an, 7:180)

“So call on Him by them,” means invoking Him by the Name or Attribute which is appropriate to the invocation you are supplicating. For instance, you might say, “O, Oft-Forgiving One, forgive me,” or, “O, Most-Merciful One, have mercy on me,” or, “O, All-Protector, protect me,” and so on.

Invoking Allah as an act of worship means the following: For you to perform acts of worship that are in accordance with His Names. For instance, you repent to Him, because He is the Acceptor of Repentance. You mention Him with your tongue, because He is All-Hearing. You worship Him with your limbs, because He is All-Seeing. You fear him in private, because He (SWT) is All-Knowing.

Because of the importance of Allah's Names and Attributes, and because some people, either through ignorance or through blind following, have an erroneous understanding of His Names and Attributes, I wanted to write a book which contains important principles that, if followed, will help us develop a sound understanding of the meanings and significance of Allah's Names and Attributes. I hope that Allah (SWT) will make this work of mine something that is sincerely for His Countenance, that is in harmony with His Good Pleasure, and that is a source of benefit for His slaves. I have titled it, Excellent Principles in Regard to Allah's Beautiful Names and Attributes.

Principles Regarding the Names of Allah (SWT)

The First Principle:

All of Allah's Names are beautiful to the highest degree. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ﴾

{And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah.} (Qur'an, 7:180)

This first principle is because they imply qualities that are perfect and complete, containing neither flaw nor deficiency. An example of that is the name, the Ever-Living, which is one of the Names of Allah (SWT). It implies a life that is complete, one that was not preceded by nothingness, and one that never climaxes and will never come to an end. The, 'Ever-Living,' also implies other qualities that are similarly perfect and complete, such as knowledge, ability, hearing, and sight and others.

Another example is the Name, the All-Knowing. It too is one of the Names of Allah (SWT), and it implies knowledge that is complete – knowledge that was not preceded by ignorance and that will never result in forgetfulness. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَىٰ﴾

{“The knowledge thereof is with my Lord, in a Record. My Lord is neither unaware nor He forgets.”} (Qur'an, 20:52)

Allah's knowledge is at once vast and complete. It denotes not only knowledge of the general aspects of everything, but also knowledge of the minutest details of everything, regardless of whether that means knowledge of His own actions or knowledge of the actions and movements of His creation. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنَ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظِلْمَةٍ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

{And with Him are the keys of the Ghaib (all that is hidden), none knows them but He. And He knows whatever there is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth or anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record.} (Qur'an, 6:59)

﴿وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ
مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

{And no moving (living) creature is there on earth but its provision is due from Allah. And He knows its dwelling place and its deposit (in the uterus or grave). All is in a Clear Book (Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz-the Book of Decrees with Allah).} (Qur'an, 11:6)

﴿يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسْرُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾

{He knows what is in the heavens and on earth, and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. And Allah is the All-Knower of what is in the breasts (of men).} (Qur'an, 64:4)

A third example is Allah's Name, the Most Merciful. It implies mercy that is complete and perfect. The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) referred to that mercy one day, after the conclusion of a battle that took place between the Muslims and the disbelievers. The females and children of enemy soldiers were gathered and taken as captives. When a woman saw her infant boy among the group of captives, she raced towards him, embraced him with a powerful embrace, and then preceded to breastfeed him. When seeing what she did, the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

”لِلَّهِ أَزْهَمُ بِعِبَادِهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ بَوْلِدِهَا“

“Verily, Allah is more merciful towards His slaves than she is towards her child.”

The Name, “the Most Merciful” also implies a kind of mercy that is vast and all-encompassing. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ﴾

{“And My Mercy embraces all things.”} (Qur'an, 7:156)

And He said about the supplication of the Angels for the believers:

﴿رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا﴾

{“Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge.”} (Qur'an, 40:7)

Definitely, each of Allah's Names is beautiful in and of itself. But, each name is also beautiful when it is coupled with another of Allah's beautiful names, compiling completeness upon completeness. An example of that are the two names, 'The Almighty, The All-Wise'. Allah (SWT) frequently mentions these names together in the Noble Qur'an. Each name on its own points to a level of completion and perfection that is specific to it. Accordingly, the name, 'The Almighty,' points to complete might and power. The name, 'The All-Wise,' points to complete wisdom. But, when they are mentioned together, they imply another kind of perfection. Allah's might and power are coupled with wisdom. Thus, His might and power never lead to oppression or wrongdoing. This is contrary to what occurs among created beings. When a human being becomes powerful, his power and might may lead him towards evil-doing, transgression, tyranny, and oppression. Similarly, Allah's wisdom is coupled with complete might and power. This is contrary to the state of created beings. If a human being is wise, he might not have the power and might to fight the tyranny and oppression that takes place around him.

The Second Principle:

Allah's Names are both proper names and attributes. They are proper names in the sense that they refer to a being, namely, Allah (SWT), and they are attributes in the sense that they signify important meanings. As proper names, they are synonymous, with each one referring to the same being – Allah (SWT). As attributes, they are distinct and varying, with each one conveying a specific meaning. The

Ever-Living, the All-Knowing, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Most Merciful, the Almighty, the All-Wise – these are all names that refer to the same being, namely, Allah (SWT). But the meaning of the Ever-Living is not the same as the meaning of the All-Knowing, and the meaning of the All-Knowing is not the same as the meaning of the All-Seeing, and so on and so forth.

Allah’s Names are both proper names and attributes, as clearly indicated in the Qur’an. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾

{And He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.} (Qur’an, 10:107)

And in another verse, He (SWT) said:

﴿ وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ﴾

{And your Lord is Most Forgiving, Owner of mercy.} (Qur’an, 18:58)

The second verse establishes the fact that the Most-Merciful One possesses the quality of mercy. Scholars of the Arabic language unanimously agree that the word, ‘scholar,’ can refer only to a person who has knowledge, that the word, ‘hearer,’ can refer only to a person who possesses the faculty of hearing, that the word, ‘seer,’ can refer only to a person who possesses the faculty of sight, and so on.

This is something that is so logical and clear that it requires no proof. Yet, there are misguided people who dissociate the names of Allah from their meanings. They say that Allah is called, ‘All-Hearing’, but He has no sense of hearing; that Allah is called, ‘All-Seeing,’ but He has no sense of sight; that Allah (SWT) is the, Almighty, but He has neither might nor power. This is ludicrous, but is made even more ridiculous by their reasoning. They argue that if you accept the many attributes and qualities [of Allah], then they must refer to more than one being. This argument is refuted by revealed texts and common sense.

As for revealed texts, Allah described Himself with many attributes and qualities, even though He is the One. Allah (SWT) said:

﴿ إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ هُوَ بَدِئُ وَيَعِيدُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ ﴿١٤﴾ ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَالٌ لِمَا يُرِيدُ ﴾

{Verily, (O Muhammad) the Seizure (punishment) of your Lord is severe and painful. Verily, He it is who begins (punishment) and repeats (punishment in the Hereafter) (or originates the creation of everything, and then repeats it on the Day of Resurrection). And He is Oft-Forgiving, full of love (towards the pious who are real true believers of Islamic Monotheism), Owner of the Throne, the Glorious, (He is the) Doer of whatsoever He intends (or wills).} (Qur’an, 85:12-16)

In another chapter of the, Qur’an, He (SWT) said:

﴿ سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى ۝۱ الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى ۝۲
وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى ۝۳ وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَى ۝۴ فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَى ﴾

{Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has created (everything), and then proportioned it; And who has measured (preordainments for each and everything, even to be blessed or wretched); then guided (i.e., showed mankind the right as well as wrong paths, and guided the animals to pasture); and Who brings out the pasturage, And then makes it dark stubble.} (Qur'an, 87:1-5)

In these verses, many attributes are mentioned, still they all refer to the same single being – to Allah (SWT). Obviously it does not follow that many attributes must refer to different beings.

The argument put forward by those who wish to dissociate Allah's Names from their meanings is refuted by logic as well. Attributes are not separate beings from the being they describe; they are simply qualities of that being. Furthermore, every existing thing or being possesses various qualities.

Based on what has preceded, we know that, 'ad-dahr,' or, 'the time' is not one of Allah's Names. It is a stagnant, lifeless name, conveying none of the meanings we find conveyed by the beautiful Names of Allah (SWT). It is simply a word that is used to describe the passage of time. Allah (SWT) said to those who deny the resurrection:

﴿ وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ ﴾

{And they say: "There is nothing but our life of this world; we die and we live and nothing destroys us except ad-dahr (the time)."} (Qur'an, 45:24)

What they mean is, nothing destroys us, except the passing of days and nights – the inevitability of growing old and of dying as a result of the natural aging process that takes place with the passage of time.

Some people argue that, 'the time,' is one of Allah's Names, since the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, Allah – the Possessor of Might and Majesty – said:

﴿ يُؤْذِينِي ابْنُ آدَمَ ، يَسُبُّ الدَّهْرَ وَأَنَا الدَّهْرُ ، بِيَدِي الْأَمْرُ أَقْلُبُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴾

"The son of Adam annoys me: He curses 'the time,' and I am 'the time.' The matter is in My Hand: I rotate the night and the day."

This, however, in no way proves that 'the time' is one of Allah's Names. Those who curse time refer to the span of time during which tragedies take place; they do not refer to Allah. Allah explained the meaning of "I am 'the time'" with His saying, "The matter is in My Hand: I rotate the night and the day." Allah (SWT) is the Creator of time and of what takes place during time. He rotates between day and night. Hence, time means the passage of day and night. It becomes clear, therefore, that, in the aforementioned Hadeeth, it is not possible that 'the time' refers to Allah (SWT).

The Third Principle:

If the meaning of one of Allah's Names extends beyond Allah (SWT) Himself [to reach His creation], then that name implies three principles:

1. That name is affirmed as being one of Allah's Names.
2. The quality that is implied by that name is affirmed as being one of the Attributes of Allah (SWT).
3. The ramification or implication of that attribute is also affirmed.

For this reason, people of knowledge say that, if a highway robber repents, he should not be punished for his crimes. They cite as evidence the saying of Allah (SWT):

﴿ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾

{Except for those who (having fled away and then) came back (as Muslims) with repentance before they fall into your power; in that case, know that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.} (Qur'an, 5:34)

This is because the two names in this verse – the Oft-Forgiving and the Most Merciful – imply that Allah has forgiven their sins and has shown mercy to them by lifting the punishment they should have otherwise received.

An example of this principle is the name, “the All-Hearer.” It affirms the fact that “the All-Hearer” is one of the Names of Allah (SWT). It affirms the fact that hearing is one of Allah's attributes or qualities. It also affirms the consequence or result of the said attribute - that Allah (SWT) hears even what is spoken in secret and in private gatherings. For, as Allah (SWT) said:

﴿ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴾

{And Allah hears the argument between you both. Verily, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Seer.} (Qur'an, 58:1)

However, if the implied meaning of one of Allah's Names does not extend beyond Allah Himself, then only two principles are affirmed:

That name is affirmed as being one of Allah's Names.

The quality that is implied by that name is affirmed as being one of the Attributes of Allah (SWT).

An example of this is the name, “the Ever-Living”. It affirms the fact that “the Ever-Living” is one of the Names of Allah (SWT), as well as, affirming life as being one of the attributes of Allah (SWT).

The Fourth Principle:

We learn more about the Names of Allah (SWT) through the necessary, logical consequences of their meanings. An example of this principle is the name, “The Creator”. Based on the principles we have discussed thus far, we know that “The Creator” refers to Allah (SWT), as well as to the quality of creating things. But, by way of understanding the necessary, logical consequences of the meaning of being, “The Creator”, we affirm Allah’s Attribute of knowledge and ability. After all, only one who has the knowledge of how to create, and the ability to put that knowledge into action, can actually create things. For this reason, when Allah (SWT) mentioned the creation of the heavens and the earth, He said:

﴿لِنَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا﴾

{That you may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah surrounds (comprehends) all things in (His) Knowledge.} (Qur’an, 65:12)

The ability to deduce rulings based on the necessary, logical consequences of the phrasing of revealed texts is indispensable for a student of knowledge. For with that ability, a student of knowledge may derive legal rulings in various issues from a single revealed text.

Here is another important lesson that we should learn: If there is a necessary, obvious, logical consequence of something that Allah (SWT) or His Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, then that consequence must be true. Whatever Allah and His Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said is categorically true, and the necessary, logical consequence of the truth is also the truth. Allah has full knowledge of the necessary, logical consequence of each of His and His Messenger’s sayings. Therefore, that consequence is always intended by Allah (SWT).

As for the logical extension of the speech of anyone other than Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), then that can fall into one of three situations.

First, the logical extension is pointed out to the person who made the statement, and he both accepts and affirms the meaning of that logical extension. An example of this occurs when a person who negates those of Allah’s Attributes which involve actions says to a person who affirms them, “The logical extension of you affirming those of Allah’s Attributes which involve actions is that some of Allah’s actions are new.” The person who affirms those attributes then replies, “Yes, I accept that logical extension. For indeed, Allah (SWT) always has and always will do as He pleases. There is no limit or end to His sayings and actions. For as Allah (SWT) says:

﴿قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ
قَبْلَ أَنْ نُنْفِذَ كَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا﴾

{Say (O Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to mankind). “If the sea were ink for (writing) the Words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord would be finished, even if we brought (another sea) like it for its aid.”} (Qur’an 18: 109)

Allah (SWT) also said: